DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 350 032 JC 920 483

AUTHOR	Dyer, Patricia A.
TITLE	Learning and Student Success: The Mission of Higher Education.
INSTITUTION	Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges.
PUB DATE	Sep 91
NOTE	6p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Piedmont Technical College, P.O. Drawer 1467, Greenwood, SC 29648 ($3).
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges (SACJTC) Occasional Paper; v9 n2 Sep 1991
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Accountability; College Outcomes Assessment; *College Role; Community Colleges; *Institutional Mission; Instructional Improvement; Remedial Instruction; *Student Educational Objectives; Success; Teacher Improvement; *Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students

ABSTRACT

In the accountability movement in higher education, the success of two-year colleges is often viewed solely by standards which apply only to four-year institutions, such as the completion of a degree program. Many two-year college students, however, enroll to prepare for employment, to develop important life skills, or to retrain for employment. Among the student satisfaction and retention measures which can be used to evaluate institutional effectiveness in two-year colleges are completion of educational goals; achievement of career goals; course grades; and student assessment of cognitive and noncognitive outcomes. In addition, post-education satisfaction and success measures can be examined, including attainment of a job related to curriculum; transfer to a four-year institution; attainment of advanced degrees; performance on certification and licensure exams; and job success. The efforts of two-year colleges to measure institutional effectiveness has drawn attention to the low-level of preparedness among entering students, leading to more comprehensive assessment and remediation programs. In addition, a growing awareness of the importance of effective instruction has led to increasing efforts in the areas of critical thinking, active learning programs, and classroom research. The diverse profile of the two-year college student calls for a curriculum with adequate remedial programs, clearly stated learning objectives, an emphasis on communication and decision making skills, and a strong multicultural component. Finally, the success of two-year college students depends on faculty who represent the diversity of the student body, and who are committed to student success and to their own self-improvement in the classroom. (PAA)

ED350032

Occasional Paper

Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

Volume 9, Number 2

Lex D. Walters, Editor
September 1991

LEARNING AND STUDENT SUCCESS: The Mission of Higher Education

by Dr. Patricia A. Dyer

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☒ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

L. D. Walters

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

JC920483

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Occasional Paper

Southern Association of Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

Volume 9, Number 2

Lex D. Walters, Editor
September 1991

LEARNING AND STUDENT SUCCESS: The Mission of Higher Education

by Dr. Patricia A. Dyer

People in America believe that education is the path to a better life. Yet, a very large number of students drop out before high school graduation or stop out at graduation to work because of economic need. However, of those who drop out, stop out, or find themselves in life situations that are unsatisfactory, many will look later for opportunities for more education.[1]

There has never been a time when "student success" was not the underlying principal goal of the community, junior or technical college, but recently we have recognized the need to verbalize and state more plainly this centralness of learning to the mission of education. We must remind ourselves and others that the success of educational institutions is the success of students and is founded on student learning and performance. The recent move toward demands for institutional effectiveness and accountability stems from the failure of higher education systems to demonstrate to business and legislative leaders that colleges are meeting their goals and missions which are typically stated in the most philosophical, but perhaps unmeasurable, terms. In most cases colleges and universities do not specifically address in their mission statements the principal purpose of higher education: learning.

In the last decade political/legislative pressures have directed our attention to the need for accountability in the spending of the multibillion dollar annual budget for education in the United States along with meeting the two-year college goal of providing higher education to all who can benefit from it. In this process two-year colleges have been examining themselves more closely than ever, asking for what are we really accountable and what is institutional effectiveness and again how is institutional effectiveness achieved.

DEFINITION

The drive to provide higher education to the economically disadvantaged, both men and women, and to culturally and ethically diverse populations has been expressed through numerous slogans using words such as access - opportunity - diversity - quality - equality - excellence - success - retention - effectiveness - accountability. Regardless of institutional mission statement or slogan, the major goal of educational institutions is "student success." The National Council of Instructional Administrators has been reframing the concept of student success in terms of measurable learning and effective teaching. At a recent workshop offered by the Board of the NCIA and attended by members of several AACJC affiliated councils and organizations, under the guidance of facilitator Dr. Thomas Angelo, professor and Director of Faculty Development at California State University, Long Beach, the Council defined student success and successful student in this way:

* Learning is at the heart of student success. Successful students are successful learners who identify, commit to, and attain their educational goals. They demonstrate the skills, knowledge, attitudes and self-direction needed to perform ethnically and productively in society, to adapt to change, to appreciate diversity, and to make a reasoned commitment on issues of importance.

The principal changes in the two-year college student population over the years have been in average age and in ethnic diversity. Student goals and needs have not basically changed. They continue to be university parallel education, preparation for employment, the learning of better life skills (identified in the definition of student success above), and retraining for the workforce. The public expectation (business, community and legislative) of community college success, however, often has been in the same terms as for universities. Measuring student success in the two-year college by whether the student has completed a degree for university transfer and the continuation of a degree is not relevant for many community college students since their educational goals vary so widely and may not include degree completion at all.

Two-year colleges do have wonderfully successful students in "university" terms. In April 1991 USA Today[2] with AACJC named 60 two-year college students nationwide who comprised first, second and third ALL-USA Academic teams. Selected by Phi Theta Kappa, the honor fraternity for two-year colleges, these students not only have high academic

achievement, but demonstrate college service, community service, honors and awards, and faculty recognition. Even though we see this kind of achievement by students reflecting a typical two-year college profile: 65% female, age range from 19 to 55, minority representation, employed, single parents, married, there are many more success stories which do not receive such visible acclaim and which are of a different type.

Public colleges in Florida are required to demonstrate placement in employment related to the program of study of 70 percent of their students in 70 percent of their vocational degree and certificate programs annually. This includes both graduates and leavers who were enrolled in the program at the time of leaving. This is required for continued program funding.

In defining institutional effectiveness factors, Alfred and Kreider[3] identified these critical success factors for students:

STUDENT SATISFACTION AND RETENTION—Internal factors

* Student completion of educational goal(s)
* Achievement of career goal(s)
* Individual course grades/gpa
* Student performance and assessment of cognitive outcomes
* Student perception of noncognitive outcomes

POST-EDUCATION SATISFACTION AND SUCCESS—External factors

* Attainment of a job related to curriculum
* Transfer
* Attainment of advanced degree(s)
* Performance on certification and licensure examinations
* Job success

While "transfer" and "attainment of advanced degree(s)" are included in this characterization, there are eight other factors recognizing the diversity of student needs and goals. All ten are potentially measurable so that two-year colleges can demonstrate on this basis that they are being effective in developing successful students.

The reality is that as a result of the push for assessment as a basis for reporting institutional and student accomplishments, that is, as a measure of effectiveness, two-year colleges now have documented the fact that more than 50% of their entering students, nationwide, test and place below college level in academic preparation for basic skills. Community colleges have had (from the beginning) a goal to take students where they are academically and to provide them the learning opportunities to meet their educational goals, whatever they are. In some states a person's age is sufficient to guarantee entrance to a public community college. In others a high school diploma is required for entrance. In either of the cases, testing statistics on entry-level preparation overall are similar. Some states have strengthened their high school graduation requirements in an effort to remedy this situation. In Florida seven years after such legislation, the state had increased its high school dropout rate to one of the highest of the fifty states. A solution to this preparation problem is very complex. There are no simple solutions. For those who opt at a later time to continue their education, basic skills courses will be needed.

A second statistic that has emerged from the accountability movement is the "low" transfer rate of two-year colleges to upper division universities by way of associate degrees. Colleges can now document that many of their students transfer before graduation and that many have educational goals other than associate degrees.

Further, in refining the idea of a successful student, and making it as public as possible, two-year colleges can show numerically that their students are successful in other contexts. Colleges are moving away from measures of size and enrollment to illustrate their quality to measures of achievement: student performance and satisfaction and the completion of student goals.

The effort by the NCIA in restating a definition of student success in terms of learning include identification of strategies to help students achieve that success. The strategies range through admissions, orientation, classroom and curriculum, the faculty, the college as a whole and the world beyond including professional organizations, publications and reward programs and learning opportunities for college faculty.

Student Services

Many valuable student services have been developed over the years geared toward helping students become successful in college. These usually include orientations, setting career goals, learning to learn, and test-taking skills. Added to these, with the current emphasis on assessment and institutional effectiveness, has been testing with subsequent mandatory placement. Many states now require entry-level testing in public colleges and in some of those placement is required by law. In California mandatory placement has been struck down in the courts as discriminatory. In many colleges "comprehensive" assessment is underway. In 1989 the AACJC Board of Directors adopted a policy statement on student assessment[4] which says in part:

> ". . . appropriate assessment of student skills and careful placement in responsive education programs are needed to increase the probability of student success. Comprehensive assessment is critical to the achievement of access . . . To allow academically underprepared students to enter classes for which they are not ready may close the door to student success and block the road to achievement of both institutional and student educational goals.
>
> Also it says, "The assessment program should combine systematic efforts and educational tools to guide the learning and teaching processes. The program should begin on or before the time of enrollment, continue throughout enrollment, and conclude with outcome assessments."

Stemming from the accountability demands, student tracking systems are in the process of being designed enabling colleges to demonstrate where students are academically, beginning with data collection at admissions and with the entry-level tests and continuing throughout their college career. These requirements lay an additional burden on student services departments but are critical in documenting the progress students make toward their goals.

In The Classroom

In recent years attention to research in activities leading to student success in the classroom has been intense. As early as 1984[5] research was reported identifying "universal conditions of excellence" for involvement in learning. In 1987 Chickering and Gamson[6] reported seven principles of promoting student success in the classroom. The NCIA cites other activities such as use of advanced technology, emphasis on understanding, high expectations, making known to students the desired learning outcomes for each course, the use of reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking across the curriculum as well as the use of classroom research techniques to improve teaching and learning.

The 1990 AACJC humanities report[7] said "Instruction . . . must engage students extensively in activities to take them beyond the mere acquisition of facts and the comprehension of principles and theories. Students must be asked to understand." Mortimer Adler[8] says "all genuine learning is active, not passive. It involves the use of the mind, not just the memory. It is a process of discovery in which the student is the main agent." The Commission on the Future of Community Colleges[9] continues in this manner, "All students, not just the most aggressive or most verbal, should be actively engaged" [in the classroom in learning]. Community colleges claim that their strength lies in teaching rather than in research as is the case in four-year colleges and universities. Some movement is being made toward classroom research in community colleges to support improvement in student learning and, consequently, student success. K. Patricia Cross and others have been doing extensive work in this area. Classroom Assessment Techniques[10] outlines a number of research activities faculty may use in the classroom to improve their own effectiveness and the determination of progress in student learning.

In 1989 an AACJC policy statement, Scholarship at Community Technical, and Junior Colleges," supports this trend: "To place the role of scholarship in its proper perspective at community, technical and junior colleges, it must be broadly defined. As the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges[9] asserts, the discovery of knowledge through research is only one part of scholarship. "It is also important to recognize the scholarship of integrating knowledge, through curriculum development, the scholarship of applying knowledge, through service, and above all, the scholarship of presenting knowledge through effective teaching." The statement goes on to define the role of the faculty member as a classroom researcher, "one who is involved in the evaluation of his or her own teaching even as it takes place," and emphasizes the need for "including classroom research in each instructor's job description."

Curriculum

For students to be successful, the learning opportunities must be available. Reports and statements about community colleges and their students usually point out the special, multifaceted student profile. Not only are these students widely varied in their abilities and preparation, they have widely varied educational goals springing from their life situations: age, marital status, family circumstances, employment, economic position, ethnic group, and surely others. Because of this diversity, the curriculum must be tailored to fit. It should include:

- An adequate remedial/developmental/preparatory program to meet the needs of the large proportion of underprepared at entry.
- Learning objectives/competencies for each course stated clearly and provided to the student.
- Communication skills and decision making skills either for transfer or for general life skills through reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking practice in every course.
- For the same reasons, a strong general education program.
- A strong multicultural and international emphasis for better understanding in the modern global society.
- A good process for curriculum development and review.

Faculty

The faculty have a unique place in the learning process. While teaching methods must be diversified to better meet diverse learning styles, an objective which can be met to some extent by modern technology, the faculty is still at the core of teaching and learning. Computers and television will work as alternates, but the faculty must assist in selection of equipment and applications and in relating the lessons to objectives for specific courses.

In hiring, faculty members must be selected who are committed to student success. They must be willing to prepare themselves to use multiple teaching methods based on the many learning styles exhibited. They cannot be afraid of being evaluated in their work. Faculty members must be committed to self-improvement for the classroom, using student based research when appropriate. Faculty members must continue throughout their careers to pursue professional development, in their teaching discipline and in pedagogy—in use of technology, in classroom research, in dealing with cultural diversity, and in effective teaching for different learning styles.

Selection of faculty members must include verification of satisfactory communication skills. Faculty must be willing to incorporate into their courses the reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking skills practice needed for student success. In selecting faculty, the ethnic diversity of the student population should be reflected in the faculty population. For greatest success students need role models. Colleges should provide faculty orientations as well as student orientations. Providing senior faculty mentors for new faculty can extend the initial orientation throughout the year. The faculty continues to be any college's most valuable asset in assuring student success through learning.

The College and the World Beyond

Two-year colleges must continue to deliver the message to the world that they are different from universities, that they are only in part the first half of a four-year education. In the process of establishing institutional effectiveness and accountability in preparing successful students, this message must be delivered to the community, to the business leaders and to the legislatures. Two-year colleges have been successful in meeting their goals beyond anyone's dreams. We

must convey that information much more broadly. Our students' goals are broadly varied. The colleges are providing the educational means to achieve those goals. We do prepare students for the second half of a baccalaureate degree. Still, the two-year colleges do much more. We must continue to tell the world about our student successes.

REFERENCES

1. National Research Council. (1991) Moving Beyond Myths: Revitalizing Undergraduate Mathematics. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press. page 4.
2. Ordovensky, Pat. (April 16, 1991). "Many Paths to Success in Two-Year Schools" USA TODAY. page 9A.
3. Alfred, Richard L. and Kreider, Paul. (April/May 1991). "Creating a Culture for Institutional Effectiveness" Community, Technical, and Junior College Journal. AACJC. Washington, D.C. page 37.
4. American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. (April 1987). "Student Assessment." Policy Statement.
5. Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. (October 1984). Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education. National Institution of Education. Washington, D.C.
6. Chickering, Arthur and Gamson, Zelda. (1989). Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education: Faculty Inventory. The Johnson Foundation, Racine WI.
7. Eisenberg, Diane U., Gollattscheck, James F., Metcalf, Diana H. and Shapiro, Barbara C. (1990). Improving Human Studies. AACJC. Washington, D.C. page 84.
8. Adler, Mortimer. (1982). The Paideia Proposal: An Educational Manifesto. New York. MacMillan. page 23.
9. Commission on the Future of Community Colleges. (1988). Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century. AACJC. Washington D.C. pages 25, 26.
10. Cross, K. Patricia and Angelo, Thomas A. (1988). Classroom Assessment Techniques. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, National Center for Research to Improve Postsecondary Teaching and Learning.
11. American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. (March 1989). Scholarship at Community, Technical, and Junior Colleges. Policy Statement.

Dr. Patricia A. Dyer has been district Vice President for Academic Affairs at Palm Beach Community College, a four-campus district, since 1984. Prior to that she was provost of the Palm Beach Community College South Campus and dean of academic affairs at Broward Community College in Florida. She has been in community college administration for fourteen years.

Additional copies of this occasional paper may be obtained by writing the editor at Piedmont Technical College, P.O. Drawer 1467, Greenwood, South Carolina 29648. Copies are three dollars each, including cost of mailing. Make checks payable to SACJTC.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE